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# Hermeneutical Circle of *Prajñā-Pāramitā* Thought in Candrakīrti and Seungnang

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## *Abstract*

The present study is concerned with the hermeneutical continuity and differences of the *Prajñā-pāramitā* thought in India, China, and Korea, focusing on Nāgārjuna (150-250), Candrakīrti (600-650), and Seungnang (450-550). Candrakīrti and Seungnang. Both Seungnang and Candrakīrti use the method of dialectical reasoning to establish the middle way in the teachings of the Buddha. Although they have different historical backgrounds, as a *Mādhyamika* they follow the central teaching of Nāgārjuna. However, there are subtle differences between them in the following points. (a) In the context of doctrinal exposition, Seungnang seems to be closer to Nāgārjuna than Candrakīrti. (b) Candrakīrti uses the formal logic in systematizing Nāgārjuna's teaching. On the other hand, Seungnang's expositor Chi-tsang's writing style follows the traditional Chinese style, such as multi-perspectival accounts of doctrine. (c) As for the reestablishment of *saṃvṛti*, Seungnang seems to move up a step beyond Candrakīrti. Seungnang gives more phenomenological direction for *saṃvṛti*, i.e., the unlimited interpretations of *saṃvṛti* and *paramārtha*. This idea becomes a cornerstone for further development of Buddhist thought in the Far East.

## I. Nāgārjuna's Philosophical-Religious Tasks

In the context of Buddhist thought, the *Prajñā-pāramitā* tradition is rooted in the *Mahāsāṃghikas*, one of the 18 schools of *Abhidharma*

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Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> The Mahāsamghikas held to ideas and doctrines founded later in *Prajñā-pāramitā* literatures. The Mādhyamika school was founded by Nāgārjuna in the second century C.E. purporting faithful development of the Buddha's true intention. Nāgārjuna systematizes *sūnyatā* doctrine of the *Prajñā -pāramitā* scriptures, claiming that the doctrine of *sūnyatā* is the honest and most perfect expression of the Buddha's middle way. In fact, his thinking represents the thematic continuity of the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* (dependent origination) as the middle way, following a dialectical method of the Buddha. As the name of the school indicates, the Mādhyamika school proclaims the doctrine of the middle way.<sup>2</sup> The Far Eastern Mādhyamika school called the *San-lun-tsung* is also known as the *Chung-tao-tsung* meaning the school of the middle way, or *k'ung-tsung*, meaning the school of emptiness.

Nāgārjuna's philosophical-religious task was to purify all the non-Buddhistic elements which had grown around the Buddha's teaching such as substantialism or essentialism. He attempts to explicate the honest form of Buddhism. The *saddharma* (True Dharma), for Nāgārjuna, is a proper understanding of *pratītya-samutpāda* as he declares:

Neither perishing nor arising in time, neither terminable nor eternal. Neither self-identical nor variant in form, neither coming nor going; Such is the true way of things, the cessation of all conceptual games. As taught by the perfectly enlightened one whom I honor as the best of all teachers.<sup>3</sup> (*Mūla-madhyamika-kārikā* [abbreviated as MMK], 1 dedicatory gatha.)

<sup>1</sup> The split of the Mahāsamghikas and the sthaviras is the beginning of Mahāyāna. The Mahāsamghikas divided into the Lokottaravādin and the Ekavyavahārikas. The doctrine of *sūnyatā* is found in the Ekavyavahārikas.

<sup>2</sup> The Sanskrit noun '*madhyama*' means the middle, and the suffix '*ka*' means followers.

<sup>3</sup> "Anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāsvatam/ anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam/ yaḥ pratītyasamutpādam prapañcopasamaṃ śivam/ deś ayāmāsa saṃ buddhaḥ taṃ vandatam varam.", For Sanskrit text and English translations of the MMK see K. Inada, *Nāgārjuna: A Translation of his Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikā with an Introductory Essay* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1970), and David J. Kalupahana, *Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of Middle Way* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986). Chinese translations: T. 30, no. 1564; K. 549. Tibetan translations: To. 3824, P.5224.

Nāgārjuna reveres before the Buddha who has preached the doctrine of dependent origination. He believes that only the enlightened one can teach the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda*, i.e., the way things truly are. In fact, the doctrine of dependent origination is the very truth to which the Thatāgata is enlightened under the Bodhi tree as his enlightenment is said to be the origin of Buddhism. However, the very content of *pratītya-samutpāda* is so profound that its meaning needs to be fully elucidated. Nāgārjuna wishes to fulfill this task which Buddhists of that era might demand.

As an interpreter Nāgārjuna belongs to the tradition of the *Prajñā-pāramitā* scriptures which were composed from 100 B.C.E. with the emergence of the Mahāyāna. The tradition had to face the challenges of Hīnayānists. In order to defend the *Prajñā-pāramitā* scriptures, Nāgārjuna has developed logical argumentation, i.e., *sāstra*. Nāgārjuna completes the *Prajñā-pāramitā* scriptures which were left by nameless authors of the scriptures. Among Nāgārjuna's works the *Ta-chih-tu-lun* (*Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā-sāstra*) is the most comprehensive commentary on the *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* of 25,000 gāthās.<sup>4</sup> The *Mūla-madhyamika-kārikā* and the *Vigraha-Vyāvartanī* are polemic treatises, which aim to refute all philosophical views (*dr̥ṣṭis*) of both other Buddhist schools of the Sarvāstivāda and the Sautrāntika, and non-Buddhist schools such as the Sāmkhya, the Nyāya, the Vaiśeṣika, and the Mīmāṃsā. In the *Mūla-madhyamika-kārikā*, Nāgārjuna examines twenty-seven major problems of doctrines to prove its opponent's speculations.<sup>5</sup> However, he does not

<sup>4</sup> The *Ta-chih-tu-lun* [abbreviated TCTL] is a comprehensive encyclopedic work on the *prajñāpāramitā* literatures. Kumārajīva translated it into Chinese between 402 and 405, C.E., contained in T. 25, no. 1509, pp. 57-756, and in K. 549. It exists only in Chinese translation, 100 chuan. Concerning the authorship of the TCTL, there are some doubt, but traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna. Hui-ying wrote sub-commentary on the TCTL in the 6th century, but it is available only in fragments in HTC, 74 and 87. Etienne Lamotte translated into French the first 18 chapters of the TCTL in the *La traite de la grande vertue de sagesse*, Vols.1-4, (Louvain: 1944-49). Venkata Ramanan translated TCTL into English partially as the *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy as Presented in the Mahā- Prajñāpāramitā-Śāstra* [abbreviated as MPS] (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> Aryadeva (170-270), follower of Nāgārjuna, also severely criticizes other philosophical schools in the *Satasāstra*, A follower of Aryadeva is Rahulabhadra (200-300). His twenty-one verses in praise of *Prajñā-pāramitā* have been preserved

intend to establish any fixed philosophy, but merely tries to prove that any position set forth by philosophers involve fallacies.

## II. Candrakīrti's Systematization of Dialectical Form of śūnyatā

Candrakīrti is one of the most celebrated thinkers in Mādhyamika Buddhism. It is he who gave a systematic form to the teaching of Nāgārjuna. The central contribution of Candrakīrti was to perfect the dialectical form of reason that Nāgārjuna introduced. Candrakīrti lived between 600-50 C.E., at least four centuries after Nāgārjuna. Three important developments occurred in Mahāyāna Buddhism between the time of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti: (a) the development of formal logic, (b) the appearance and growth of Yogācāra idealism, and (c) the division of the Mādhyamika School. (Casey, 1964: 34-45) These historical and intellectual developments eventually echoed in Candrakīrti's understanding of Nāgārjuna..

In the fifth century the Indian Mādhyamika school was divided into two subsects, the Prāsangika of Buddhaalita-pālita (470-540) and the Svātantrika of Bhāvaviveka (490-570). This split within Mādhyamika indicates that they dealt with Nāgārjuna's reasoning differently. Candrakīrti belongs to the Prāsangika school which strictly follows the method of dialectical deconstruction (*prāsanga*). The method is proposed in defense of scriptural belonging, and is said to have its roots in early Buddhist scriptures, e.g., *Attakavagga* of the *Suttanipata*. (Gomez, 1977: 137-165). As the Thatāgata keeps silent on metaphysical questions, the Prāsangikas also do not want to be involved in ontological claims.

Candrakīrti supposes that the standpoint of the prāsangikaas a Māhadhyamika is rather a more orthodox one than the Svātantrikas. Candrakīrti denies the Svātantrika's admission of levels of insight into the degrees of reality and demonstration of *śūnyatā* by way of syllogism. He also criticizes Bhāvaviveka's interpretation on which Nāgārjuna has proofs that are his own (*svātantra*) and an alternate position to those refuted. For Candrakīrti, the Mādhyamika should not make statement and assertions of his own, nor establish a philosophical system to defend his own position.

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in Astasahasrita-prajnaparamita-sutra, and in the Chinese version of the *Mahaprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*.

He resorts to the *prāsanga* way of thinking which he inherited from Nāgārjuna.

The *Prasannapadā*, Candrakīrti's commentary on the Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamika-kārikā*, opens with the dedicatory speech to Nāgārjuna.

After making my obeisance to Nāgārjuna, who was born of the ocean of wisdom of the perfectly enlightened one and who rose above the realm of duality; who compassionately brought to light the hidden truth of the treasury of Buddhism in Buddha's sense. (Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā*, 1979: 33)

At the opening *gāthā*, Candrakīrti himself affirms his belonging to the lineage. He characterizes his master Nāgārjuna as Bodhisattva as one who is enlightened, who consumes the views of his opponents as though they were fueled by the intensity of his insight, and burns up the darkness in the minds of men. For Candrakīrti, Nāgārjuna's utterances are like a shower of arrows which disperse utterly the adversaries of life, and his words reign majestically over the three realms of the world and gods as well. (Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā*, 1979: 33). Thus, Candrakīrti is faithful to Nāgārjuna. However, his faith is a critical faith which denies any forms of ontological status of Buddha and Bodhisattva.

Even though Candrakīrti claims that he has no ontological position at all, this does not mean that he has no position. As a *Mādhyamika* he has to follow the hermeneutical presuppositions of his own tradition. Nobody can deny that the *Mādhyamika* also has a strong truth claim which refutes the absolute truth. As Nāgārjuna was aware of the importance of logic to refute philosophical views (*dr̥ṣṭis*), Candrakīrti also thinks that the absence of an ontological thesis is not innocent. But it means a lack of objective criteria for truth. He can examine a thesis and use formal logic and epistemology without being committed to them. Candrakīrti can use the logic of ontological language for a de-ontological purpose. He uses certain rules of argument, such as Dignāga's principle, that bring us to a level on which we have merely invalidated an adversary's thesis.

Candrakīrti's other task is to refute the Yogācāra idealism which insists that all phenomena are nothing but manifestations out of the seeds, *Ālayavijñāna*. In Yogācāra doctrines, Candrakīrti finds that Buddhist's speak non-Buddhist language using ontological logic such as subject predicate grammar and the theory of momentariness, *Ālayavijñāna*, and

*thatāgatagarba*.<sup>6</sup> They use an ontological commitment to protect their egoistic identity. As Nāgārjuna did previously, Candrakīrti wants to correct misled Buddhist thinking by proposing that making a truth claim is contrary to the Buddhist way.

However, there are hermeneutical differences between the thoughts of Candrakīrti and Nāgārjuna. As seen in the *Mūla-madhyamika-kārikā* and the *Prasannapadā*, the historical and intellectual space of four centuries makes Candrakīrti's thought richer than Nāgārjuna's. While Nāgārjuna considers logical problems as ontological ones, Candrakīrti employs more sophisticated logic and uses Dignāga's principles, i.e., a demonstration is valid only if the principles are accepted by both sides. Also Candrakīrti even does not have personal engagement with the Buddha as the Absolute, while Nāgārjuna does not attach to any concept of the Buddha but affirms the conceptless meditative state of *dhyāna* through which the absolute is met. (Casey, 1964: 40-45).

### III. Seungnam's Neo San-lun Movement

#### 1. Kumārajīva and Chinese Prajñā Studies

Even though there is no historical evidence to connect the Prāsangika school and the She-ling school of Seungnam, both Candrakīrti and Seungnam's spiritual roots in their master Nāgārjuna's teaching cause their thinking to be similar.

Seungnam's Mādhyamika thought began with Kumārajīva (343-413). Kumārajīva, a native of Kucha, introduced Nāgārjuna's Prajñā-Mādhyamika thought to China in the fourth century.<sup>7</sup> He translated major Mahāyāna scriptures and Nāgārjuna's major works into Chinese.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See on the Candrakīrti's refutation of the Yogācāra theory, see Candrakīrti, *Madhyamakāvātāra*, tr. and ed., C. W. Huntington, Jr. with Geshe Namgyal Wangchen, as *The Emptiness of Emptiness*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), pp.162-169.

<sup>7</sup> On the biography of Kumārajīva, see *Kao-seng-chun*, T. 50, 2059, pp. 330-333.

<sup>8</sup> Kumārajīva translated four of the major works of Nāgārjuna, viz, the *Mūla-madhyamika-kārikā* with Pingala's commentary, the *Dvadasamukha-śāstra*, the *Dasabhumivabhasa-śāstra*, and the *Maha-Prajñāpāramita-Śāstra*. Also he translated the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*, *Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra*, and the *Surangama-*

In Ch'ang-an, Kumārajīva finds that Chinese people are not ready to accept the *Prajñā-Mādhyamika* teachings. The correspondence between Kumārajīva and his friend Hui-yuan (334-416) shows that Chinese Buddhists at the time of Kumārajīva's arrival understand Buddhism through Taoist and Confucian metaphysics. (Hui-yuan, *Ta-ch'eng-ta-i-chang*, chapter 7 *Chiu-mo-lo-shih fa-shih ta-i*, T.44, 122-131).

Kumārajīva attempts to correct their misunderstanding in regard to Buddhist doctrines. Taoist-Buddhists, like Hui-yuan, believe that the doctrine of *dharma-kāya* means the eternality of soul. They interpret Buddhist ideas in relation to Taoist concepts and terms, called *ko-i* (marching concepts) Buddhism. In Kumārajīva's letter to Hui-yuan, he makes it clear that the *dharma-kāya* is not the ultimate reality of beings. But the characteristics of *dharma-kāya* in the *Mādhyamika* context may not be speculatively discussed as existence or non-existence. (Hui-yuan, *Ta-ch'eng-ta-i-chang*, T.44, 122-131)

Even though Kumārajīva warns his disciples that the *Mādhyamika* should not adopt ontological presuppositions, the ontological tendencies in interpreting Buddhist doctrine continued after Kumārajīva's time in China, Korea, and Japan.

## 2. The Lineages of the Neo San-lun school

It is a Korean monk Seungnang (Seng-lang in Chinese, Sōrō in Japanese) who revitalizes the *Prajñā-Mādhyamika* school in China in the late 5th century, more than one hundred years before Candrakīrti. Seungnang along with his followers, Seng-chuan, Fa-lang, and Chi-tsang connected dialectical reasoning with scriptural understanding, giving new dimensions to the concept of the two truths and the middle way. However, despite its historical and textual evidents, Seungnang's new *Mādhyamika* movement is not well known until recent years.

Seungnang was a native of Koguryo, one of three kingdoms in Korea. He traveled from Lio-tuong city to Chiang-nan (modern Kiang-su) via Tun-huang during the Chien-wu period (495-497). He stayed at the Ts'ao-t'ang temple on Mount Chung for a while, and later resided at the Ch'i-hsia temple on Mount She where he established the new San-lun school called the She-ling tradition. Chi-tsang writes:

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*samadhi-sūtra* which teach the major Mahāyāna doctrines.

The Great Master Korean Seungnang of She-shan was originally a native of Liao-tung. From the north, where he studied the doctrines of Master Kumārajīva from afar, he came south and resided at the Tsao-tang ssu on Chung-shan. He met the recluse Chou-yung, and because of this, Chou-yung received instruction from the master. The emperor Liang wu-ti reveres the three Jewels of Buddhism. The emperor heard that the Great Master Seungnang had come to the south and sent ten masters, Seng-chuan, Chi-chi, etc., to reside on the mountain and receive instruction. The emperor understood the master's doctrines of *Prajñā* and abandoned his original study of the *Ch'eng-shih-lun* (*Satyasidhiśāstra*). Relying on the Mahayana teaching, he composed a commentary.<sup>9</sup> (Chi-tsang, *Ta-ch'eng-hsuan-lun* [TCHL], 19b).

Also according to the *Kao-seng-chuan*, Seungnang was a scholar of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* and the Three Treatises. Thus Seungnang was Fa-tu's disciple, and Fa-tao's teacher was Seng-yuan. In an appendix to Fa-tu's biography Seungnang (Seng-lang) is noted:

Fa-tu had a disciple, Seungnang, who succeeded him as abbot of the mountain Temple. Seungnang was a native of Lia-tung, He was a scholar of broad erudition, able to lecture on all the sutras and Vinayas. He was especially noted for the *Avatamsaka* and the Three Treatises. The present emperor, Liang Wu-ti, saw how talented he was, and decreed that all the students of doctrine should receive the teaching on his mountain. (The *Kao-seng-chuan*, T. 50, 380c.)

There are many issues on the distinction of the old and new San-lun school. Traditionally, it is said that there are seven San-lun lineages, i.e., Kumārajīva, Tao-seng, Tan-chi, Tao-lang, Seng-chuan, Fa-lang, and Chi-tsang. However, this theory confuses Tao-lang and Seng-lang

<sup>9</sup> The date of Seungnang is not clear. But his most active years are between 476 and 512 C.E. According to Hirai's theory Seungnang arrived in Southern China in 476 C.E. The Hsi-hsia Temple inscription shows that some 36 years had passed since Seungnang arrived in the south, so at that time, 512 C.E. the Liang emperor sent ten monks to study under Seungnang at that Temple. For details, see Shunei Hirai, *Chugo-haya-shisoshi-kenkyu* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1976), pp. 256-60. On the life of Seungnang, also see the *Kao-seng-chun*, chapter of the Fa-tu-chun, T. 50, no. 2059, p. 380, and Chi-tsang's *Ehr-ti-i*, chuan 2: chapter 4, T. 45, no. 1854, p. 108b, *Ta-ch'eng-hsuan-lun*, chuan 1: chapter 5, T. 45, no. 1853, p. 19b, and *Chung-kuan-lun-shu*, chuan 2: chapter 1, T. 42, no. 1824, p. 26b.

(Seungnang). Fa-tao was the Pure Land Master who always preached the pure-land scriptures. (The *Kao-seng-chuan*, T. 50, 380c.). But Seungnang never taught Pure-Land thought. This indicates that Seungnang was not a Dharma disciple of Ta-tao, but only a follower of the mountain.

Chi-tsang also never mentions that Seungnang received the Mādhyamika teaching from Fa-tu. Chi-tsang says only that Seungnang studied Kumārajīva's doctrines in the northern land of Korea. In this respect, we can reformulate the San-lun lineage as follows:

- (a) The old San-lun school in Chan-gn and Ha-seh;  
Kumārajīva → Seng-yeh → Seng-chao → Tao-lang;
- (b) The new San-lun school;
  - ① The She-ling transmission: from Seungnang to Seng-chuan;
  - ② The Hsing-haung transmission: from Fa-lang to Chi-tsang.

Thus, the new San-lun movement at Mt. She had been completed for five generations from Seungnang to Chi-tsang. Chi-tsang, a completer of the new San-lun movement, always calls his school as the She-ling tradition, and since most ideas of Chi-tsang began with Seungnang, we also characterize this new San-lun tradition as the She-ling tradition in this study.

### 3. Seungnang's Revitalization of the San-lun School

When Seungnang arrived in southern China, Harivarman's Ch'eng-shih (*Satyasiddhi*) doctrine, the Hinayanistic teaching of emptiness, was more dominant than prajñā teachings of Nāgārjuna. The Ch'eng-shih-lun (Treatise to establish the real truth) of Harivarman was translated by Kumārajīva, and it was studied by Kumārajīva's disciples such as Seng-tao and Seng-ju.<sup>10</sup> In the sixth century the Satyasiddhians such as Fa-yun, Chih-tsang, and Seng-min take the *Ch'eng-shih-lun* as a Mahāyāna text since Harivarman refuted the Abhidharma doctrines of the existence of dharma. Many commentaries on the *Ch'eng-shih-lun* were compiled, and the San-lun

<sup>10</sup> Harivarman composed the *Satyasiddhi-Śāstra* (253 C.E.) which is opposed to the Sarvāstivādin's realism. In India, Harivarman belongs to the Sautrantika school. Kumārajīva's Chinese version of *Ch'eng-shih-lun* (T. 1646, K. 966) translated in 412 C.E. is the only surviving version. N. Aiyaswami Sastri translated it into English and it was reconstructed into Sanskrit as the *Satyasiddhisāstra of Harivarman*, two vols. (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1975, and 1978).

scholars have studied the text together with Nāgārjuna's doctrine. However, the popularity of Satyasiddhi studies led them to confuse Nāgārjuna's doctrine with Harivarman's.

Seungnang's first task in China was to separate the San-lun school from the Ch'eng-shih circle. Seungnang seems to believe that the *Ch'eng-shih-lun* does not go beyond the Sautrāntic category of Hināyana Buddhism, even though there is a certain tendency toward the Mahāyāna teaching. According to Seungnang's lay disciple Chou-yung's report Seungnang seems to regard the Ch'eng-shih doctrine as nihilism (*k'ung-chia-ming*; negating provisional reality) in contrast with Nāgārjuna's dialectic of *Chia-ming k'ung* (Negating provisional reality is also empty).<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. Seungnang's Interpretation of the Scriptural words

The most crucial issue between San-lun and Ch'en-shih circles is the problem of the two truths. Ch'eng-shih school interprets the two truths as two fixed sets of truth. They consider the distinction between *saṃvṛti-satya* and *paramārtha-satya* as ontological realities.

Since Seng-chao, one of Kumārajīva's followers, had regarded the two truths as two realities, "relative reality" and "ultimate reality," which come out of one thing, Ch'eng-shih scholars were even more attached to such metaphysical relationship. It was Seungnang who clearly distinguished "the two truths as principle" (*Yueh-li*) from "the two truths as teaching" (*Yueh-chiao*). Chisang testifies,

Why do the She-ling (Seungnang) and the Hsing-haung (Fa-lang) say that the truth (scriptural words) is conductive teaching(functional truth)? Because there are profound meanings. In order to contrast the past interpretation of truth as principle, it is provisionally said in accordance with conditions of sentient beings. (TCHL, 15a)

<sup>11</sup> The *Nan-Ch'i-shu* (Record of the southern Chi dynasty) partially deals with Chou Yung's life and his works, *San-tsung-lun* which has not survived. The *Nan-ch'i-shu* is re-edited by T'ang Yung-t'ung, *Han-wei liang-chin nan-pei-ch'ao fo-chio-shih* (Peking: Chuang-hua, 1938), p. 741. The relationship between Seungnang and Chou-yung is pointed out in Chi-tsang's works as Chou-Yung received instruction on the three treatises from Seungnang, especially the *Erh-ti-i* says that Seungnang taught Chou-yung the doctrine the middle way of the two truths. (T. 45, p. 108b.). For modern research on the historical relationship of Seungnang and Chou-yung, see Shunei Hirai, *Chugoku Hannya Shisoshi Kenkyu: Kichizo to Sanro gakuha* (Tokyo: Shujusha, 1976), pp. 256-261. The excerpt of Chou Yung's *San-tsung-lun* also is found in *Chi-tsang's Chung-kun-lun-su* (T.42, p. 29bc).

For Seungnang, the two truths are simply a teaching. They have no relationship with the substantive principle as Ch'eng-shih masters say that "the two truths are the fundamental essence of *dharma*s and the supreme principle of the non-dual absolute." (TCHL,15a). Furthermore Seungnang proposes the four levels of the two truths as antidote to the fixed set of truth. The key to the doctrine is that if the higher truth is considered to stand for something absolute, it becomes relative truth. There will be no absolute truth. All scriptural words are pragmatic in character, and eventually have to be abandoned.

Seungnang's idea of the endless deconstruction of the absolute truth in the doctrine of the four levels of two truths signifies the process of open-ended practice toward a higher perspective. For the She-ling tradition, the destruction of fixed view is at once an awakening to the right. This method is said to be the deconstruction of *drstis* as demonstration of the right (*p'o-hsieh-hsien-cheng*). For the proper understanding of the scriptural word.

Seungnang also develops the idea of threefold middle way, i.e., the relationship between the two truths and the middle way; (a) the middle way of *saṃvṛti-satya*, (b) the middle way of *Paramārtha-satya*, and (c) the middle way of the two truths combined. First he rejects self-nature for the both truths, then affirms their provisional status based on the identity of neither relative nor ultimate, and establishes their interdependency based on the identity of the middle and provisional. Like the doctrine of the four levels of the two truths this doctrine also takes the same dialectical steps sequentially, the pattern of provisional, middle, and provisional. These progressive regulations go beyond infinitive levels, toward insight into non-acquisition.

Like Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti, Seungnang's primary concerns also were to restore the Buddha's true Dharma of the Middle way (*madhyama-pratipad*). Seungnang observes that the fundamental spirit of Buddhism is non-abiding, non-attachment, and non-acquisition which also becomes the prominent idea of Seungnang's Mādhyamika philosophy. (TCHL, 15a)

Many doctrines taught by Seungnang are based on his central theme of the 'true insight of non-acquisition' which is associated with non-substantiality as the basis for non-attachment.

## 5. Chi-tsang's Sytematization of Seungnang's Thought

Thus, Seungnang's new Mādhyamika movement founded on Mount She, shows that he, like other Mādhyamikas, made Buddhism honest to itself, free from the deviated forms. Seungnang's new Mādhyamika movement was continued by Seng-chuan (--- 528), Fa-lang (507-581), and Chi-tsang (549-623).<sup>12</sup> Chi-tsang reformulated master Seungnang's scholastic views in his writings,<sup>13</sup> and testified that Seungnang was the first patriarch of the San-lun school (Sam-ron, Korean, Sanron, Japanese).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Chi-tsang (549-623, C.E.) was a Parthian's (*An-hsi*) grandson who settled down in southern China, taking the Chinese name An. Chi-tsang was born in Chin-ling. According to *Hsu-kao-seng-chun*, Chi-tsang became a novice at age of seven under the San-lun master Fa-lang (507-581) at Mt. She. The biography also states that Chi-tsang studied under *Paramārtha* in Chi-ling. Since he resided at Chia-hsiang Temple, he was known as the great master Chia-hsing. His main lectures are on the Mādhyamikathought contained in the three treatises, the *Saddhrma-pundarika-sutra*, the *Tai-chi-tu-lun*, and the *Vimalakirti-sutra*. Chi-tsang was a productive writer, he wrote twenty-six treatises, and over one hundred chuan. His writing style is systemic and analytic. For detail on the biography of Chi-tsang, see the *Hsu-kao-seng-chuan*, T. 50, no. 2060, pp. 513c-515a. And for an extensive historical study on Chi-tsang, see Shunei Hirai, *Chugoku Hannya Shiso-shi kenkyu* (Tokyo: Shunju-sha, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> The textual sources of Seungnang's thought in Chi-tsang's writings are contained in the *Ta-ch'eng-hsuan-lun* [TCHL], the *Erh-ti-i* [ETI], the *Chung-kuan-lun-su* [CKLS], and the *San-lun-hsuan-i* [SLHI]. For the partial translation of the *San-lun-hsuan-i* in English, see ed. William Theodore de Bary, *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 144-150. And the chapter 1 and 3 of the *Ta-ch'eng-hsuan-lun* are translated by Aaron ken Koseki in the *Chi-tsang's Ta-ch'eng-hsuan-lun: the two Truths and the Buddha-nature* (Ph. D. Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1977), pp. 269-418. For the complete Japanese translation of the *Ta-ch'eng-hsuan-lun* with introduction, see Hakuju Ui, *Daijo Genron: Kokuyaku issaikyo, Shoshubu 1* (Tokyo: Dai Shuppan, 1965). Mitsuyoshi Saigusa translated the *San-lun-hsuan-i* into Japanese as the *Sanron gengi, Bitten Koza*, no.27 (Tokyo: Dai Shuppan-sha, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> The San-lun refers to the Three Treatises which are: (a) Commentaries on the *Chung-lun* (*Mulamadhyamakakarika* of Nāgārjuna). There are four commentaries existent in Chinese translations; (i) The *Madhyamakasastra*, by Pingala. tr. by Kumārajīva (C.E. 409), twenty-seven chapters. (ii) The *Madhyantanugamasastra*, by Asanga. tr. by Prajnaruci, (C.E. 543), two fasciculi. (iii) The *Prajnadipasastravyakhya*, by Fen pieh ming (distinction-brightness). tr.

Chi-tsang always attributes the new ideas of the San-lun school to Seungnang, and he calls his school the She-ling tradition not the San-lun school, because he wants to distinguish it from the Kuan-chung tradition, the old San-lun.

After Chi-tsang, the Chinese Mādhyamika school declined, but Chi-tsang's Korean pupil Hea-kwan (Ekan, Japanese) transmitted the San-lun teaching to Japan and became the first patriarch of Japanese Mādhyamika school Sanron shu). As the history of Far Eastern Buddhism shows, the role of Korean Mādhyamika thinkers is significant.<sup>15</sup> One of the significances of this study is to demonstrate such historical contributions by- Korean Mādhyamikas to Far Eastern Buddhism.

#### IV. Hermeneutical Comparison of Candrakīrti and Seungnang

Both Seungnang and Candrakīrti use the method of dialectical reasoning to establish the middle way in the teachings of the Buddha. In regard to the fundamental points, we do not see any basic difference between Seungnang and Candrakīrti. Although they have different historical background, as a Mādhyamika they follow the central teaching of Nāgārjuna. However, it is important to note that there are subtle differences between them in the following points.

First, in the context of doctrinal exposition, Seungnang seems to be closer to Nāgārjuna than Candrakīrti. Historically, between Nāgārjuna and Seungnang there was not so much complex doctrinal development. What Seungnang faced was the Taositic interpretation of the *Prajñā* teaching in China. Therefore he was able to restore the Nāgārjuna's teaching properly

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Prabhamitra(C.E. 630), twenty-seven chapters. (iv) The *Prajñadīpasastravyākhyā*, by Sthitāmatī. tr. by Weitsang (C.E. 980), seventeen chapters. (b) The *Dvādaśanikāyasastra*, ascribed to Nāgārjuna and translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva (C.E. 408), twelve chapters. (c) The *Catasāstra*. By Deva, commented by Vasubandhu, translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva, (C.E. 404), ten chapters. According to a disciple of translator in the preface to the book, the Sanskrit text consisted of one hundred gathas, however, the latter of which not being considered to be useful to the Chinese readers, was left untranslated.

<sup>15</sup> For the history of Korean Mādhyamika Buddhism, see Richard A. Gard, "The Mādhyamika in Korea." *Paek Song-uk Paksa Sonsu Kinyom Bulgyohak Nonmunjip* (Seoul: Donnguk university, 1959).

in accordance with Kumārajīva's introduction. On the other hand, Candrakīrti was faced with more complex situations which had been growing in the history of Indian Buddhism. In this sense, it is possible to say that Candrakīrti's thought is not an exact pattern of Nāgārjuna's.

Second, they are different in the style of exposition. Candrakīrti's writings show that he used formal logic in systematizing Nāgārjuna's teaching. Candrakīrti completed a dialectical form of reasoning that Nāgārjuna left. On the other hand, Seungnang's expositor Chi-tsang's writing style follows the traditional Chinese style, as in the form of multi-perspectival accounts of doctrine. Although they were not Chinese they had to follow the Chinese mode of thinking and patterns. Chi-tsang's writings show that he was influenced by Taoist and Confucian patterns of thinking.

Actually both Seungnang and Chi-tsang were not Chinese, but they pursued religious activities in China. We often find Chi-tsang's works signed as "Hu Chi-tsang," meaning a barbarian (non-Chinese) Chi-tsang which indicates Chi-tsang's origin as a Parthian. This fact seems to be crucial in the sense that the Mādhyamika thought was not accepted by the Chinese mode of thinking. The historical fact that Chinese Mādhyamika Buddhism declined after Chi-tsang supports this point.

Third, with regard to the re-establishment of *saṃvṛti*, Seungnang seems to move up a step beyond Candrakīrti. Although they have the same logical ground for the establishment of *saṃvṛti*, i.e., *śūnyatā* of *saṃvṛti* and *paramārtha* in terms of interdedendency, Seungnang gives more phenomenological direction for *saṃvṛti*. In the four methods of interpretation, the She-lingian holds that a single term is no longer limited to one meaning but it has innumerable meanings, which is unlimited interpretation. At this point, worldly phenomena signifies all the *dharmas*, including *saṃvṛti* and *nirvāṇa*. There is neither obstruction nor restriction between all worldly phenomena.

In this sense, a single term of the scriptural word signifies all the *dharmas*, so does all *dharmas*. This interpretation seems to be influenced by the Hua-yen sutra's doctrine of the *dharma-dhātu*. In fact, Seungnang and Chi-tsang were also masters of the *Hua-yen sūtra*. However, we do not consider that the She-ling system is based on the *Hua-yen sūtra*. It is firmly based on Nāgārjuna's doctrine, but there is a tendency to move up the field of the *Dharma-dhātu* in She-ling thought. Therefore, it is not correct to say that the She-ling school leaves little room for the establishment of worldly convention. On the contrary, Seungnang's ultimate concern lies in this

point. However, this idea was not fully developed in the She-ling school. This task was achieved by Hua-yen master Fa-tsang during the T'ang period. Thus, the She-ling idea of unlimited interpretation became the cornerstone for further development of Buddhist thought in the Far East.

## Glossary of Chinese Terms

\* Notes: S = Sanskrit. K = Korean. J = Japanese.

- Ch'ang-an 長安  
 Ch'eng-shih-lun, Satyasidhi-sastra (S), sungsil-ron (K) 成實論  
 Ch'i-hsing-ssu 棲霞寺  
 Chao-lun 肇論  
 Chen-su erh-ti 真俗二諦  
 Chi-tsang, Kil-jang (K), Kichizo (J) 吉藏  
 Chia-hsing Ta-shih 嘉祥大師  
 Chung-kuan-lun-su 中觀論疏  
 Chung-lun 中論  
 Chung-shan 鍾山  
 Erh-ti-i 二諦義  
 Fa-lang 法朗  
 Fa-tu 法度  
 Hsing-haung 興皇  
 Hsu-kao-seng-chuan 續高僧傳  
 Hsuan-tsang 玄奘  
 Hua-yen, Hwaom (K)  
 Hui-yuan 惠遠  
 K'ung 空  
 Kao-seng-chuan 高僧傳  
 Ko-i 格義  
 Kokuryo (K) 高句麗  
 Liao-tung 遼東  
 P'an-chiao 判教  
 Pa-jo wu-chih lun  
 Pai-lun 百論  
 p'o-hsieh-hsien-cheng 破邪顯正  
 San-lun-hsuan-i 三論玄義  
 San-lun-tsung, Sam-ron-chong (K), Sanron shu (J) 三論宗

Seng-chao 僧肇  
 Seng-chuan 僧詮  
 Seng-jui 僧叡  
 Seungnang (K), Seng-lang (C), Soro (J) 僧朗  
 She-ling, Seub-ryung (K) 攝嶺  
 She-lun-chung, Sa-ron-chong (K), Shiron shu (J) 四論宗  
 She-lun-hsuan-I, Shiron-gengi (J) 四論玄義  
 She-shan, Seubsan (K) 攝山  
 Shih-erh-men-lun 十二門論  
 Ta-ch'eng-hsuan-lun 大乘玄論  
 Ta-chih-tu-lun 大智度論  
 Tsa-t'ang-ssu 草堂寺  
 yueh-chiao, yak-gyo (K), yakukyo (J) 約教  
 yueh-li, yak-li (K), yakuri (J) 約理

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